

2024
ReelStitch

13 APRIL - 12 MAY 2024

**A
CASE
FOR THE
EXISTENCE
OF
GOD**

BY SAMUEL D. HUNTER

DIRECTED BY GARY ABRAHAMS

WELCOME

Welcome to Red Stitch Actors' Theatre,
Australia's leading actors' ensemble.

We exist to advance the vitality of theatre in Australia by nurturing artists and promoting integrity in our craft. The ensemble of actors and creatives who comprise our company endeavour to produce the best in contemporary playwriting from around the world, to enrich the craft of acting and script development in this country, and to sustain a unique organisational model – one that puts artists at the centre of its practice. Established in 2002, we perform contemporary Australian plays and award-winning new writing from around the world.

We also play a vital role in the development and presentation of new Australian works through our unique INK playwriting program, and offer opportunities for theatre-makers at all stages of their careers to hone and develop their craft.

With a national reputation for the quality of our work, Red Stitch remains at the forefront of contemporary Australian theatre practice.

We at Red Stitch acknowledge and pay our respects to Australia's First Peoples and Elders past and present, and offer our gratitude to the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, on whose unceded lands we work.

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RED STITCH ACTORS' THEATRE PRESENTS

A CASE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

BY **SAMUEL D. HUNTER**

13 April - 12 May 2024

CAST

Keith Kevin Hofbauer

Ryan Darcy Kent

CREATIVES

Director Gary Abrahams

Set & Costume Design Jeremy Pryles

Lighting Design Sidney Younger

Composition/Sound Design Rachel Lewindon

Dialect Coach Matt Furlani

Assistant Director Marni Mount

PRODUCTION

Production Manager Charlie D.

Stage Manager Genevieve Davidson

STAFF

Artistic Director Ella Caldwell

Production Manager Charlie D.

FOH Manager Penelope Thomson

Associate Producer Krystalla Pearce

Marketing Coordinator Darcy Kent

Finance Manager Shadi Habash

Grants Writer Ricardo Ferreira

THANKS

Lindsay Templeton, Chiara Wenban, Louisa Fitzgerald, Chunky Move,
Natalya Shield.



Playwright

SAMUEL D. HUNTER

Samuel D. Hunter grew up in Moscow, Idaho. His full-length plays include *The Whale* (Drama Desk Award, Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play, GLAAD Media Award, Drama League and Outer Critics Circle nominations for Best Play), *A Case for the Existence of God* (New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play), *Greater Clements* (Drama Desk Nomination for Best Play, Outer Critics Circle Honoree), *Lewiston/Clarkston* (Drama Desk nomination for Best Play), *A Bright New Boise* (Obie Award, Drama Desk nomination for Best Play), *The Few*, *A Great Wilderness*, *Rest*, *Pocatello*, *The Healing*, and *The Harvest*, among others.

He is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, a Whiting Writers Award, an Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, the Sky Cooper Prize, the PONY/Lark Fellowship, and an honorary doctorate from the University of Idaho. A film adaptation of *The Whale*, written for the screen by Hunter, directed by Darren Aronofsky and starring Brendan Fraser, was released by A24 Films to much acclaim. His work has been developed at the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, the Ojai Playwrights Conference, Seven Devils, and PlayPenn. Two published anthologies of his work are available from TCG books, a third is forthcoming.

He is a member of New Dramatists and a current Resident Playwright at the Signature Theater in New York. He holds degrees in playwriting from NYU, The Iowa Playwrights Workshop, and Juilliard.



Director

GARY ABRAHAMS

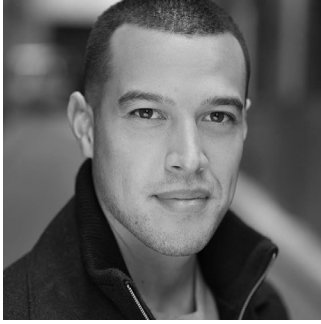
Gary has directed the Australian premieres and National tours of several large-scale commercial shows, as well as classic texts, contemporary plays, new Australian scripts, and devised projects. His work encompasses large scale commercial plays and musicals, main-stage works, independent shows and self produced theatre projects.

His recent directing credits include the return season of *Yentl* at Malt-house Theatre, premiere season of *Driftwood*, for the Umbrella Foundation, the Australian premiere of *Admissions* for Melbourne Theatre Company, *Lucrezia Borgia* for Melbourne Opera, *Iphigenia In Splott* at Red Stitch Actors Theatre, *Yentl*, *Durk A Modne Gloz* and *Ghetto Cabaret* for Kadimah Yiddish Theatre, *33 Variations* starring academy award winning actor Ellen Burstyn at Melbourne's

Comedy Theatre, the Australian premieres of *Hand to God* and *Bad Jews* for The Vass Theatre Group. In 2017 he directed *Angels In America: Parts One and Two* for Cameron Lukey Productions, and the national tour of his adaptation of *Therese Raquin* for his company Dirty Pretty Theatre. Other recent credits include *POMONA*, *ROAM*, *The Pride*, *Day One*, *A Hotel*, *Evening*, *Laramie*, *10 Years On* and *Oh Well Never Mind Bye* all for Red Stitch Actors Theatre, and *Buyer and Cellar* for Melbourne Theatre Company.

He recently won the Green Room Award for Outstanding Playwriting for *Yentl*, and has been nominated for several awards for his plays. As a director he is twice the winner of the Green Room Award for Outstanding Direction, and he has been nominated a further five times. He is a recipient of THE GRACE WILSON TRUST AWARD for writing, THE JIM MARKS SCHOLARSHIP for Artistic Practice and THE MIKE WALSH FELLOWSHIP for directing.

CAST & CREATIVES



KEVIN HOFBAUER - KEITH

Kevin is an Australian actor who has worked consistently in TV and theatre since graduating from VCA, debuting with the role of “Constable Christian Tapu” in the hit police drama *Rush*.

Recent on-screen performances include Paramount’s *Spreadsheet*, Netflix’s *Clickbait*, *Planet Lulin* for ABC and two seasons of Network Ten series *Playing for Keeps*. He has also appeared in *Informer 3838*, *True Story with Hamish & Andy*, *Sisters*, *Offspring*, *Mr & Mrs Murder* and *Small Time Gangster*.

Kevin’s theatre credits include starring in MTC productions *Touching the Void* and alongside Jai Courtenay in *Macbeth* directed by Simon Phillips. He’s also been involved in *Fast Food*, *Trevor*, *The Flick*, *The Way Out* and *Wolf Play* for Red Stitch and *Tame*, *Atlantis* and *Hour of the Wolf* for The Malthouse Theatre.



DARCY KENT - RYAN

Darcy is a graduate of 16th Street Actors Studio and The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in the UK, where he completed his Masters in Classical Acting.

Recent theatre credits include; *In The Club* (Bullet Heart Club, Theatreworks); *Far Away* (Patalog Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Pop-Up Globe); *The Amateurs*, *Heroes of the Fourth Turning*, *Lamb*, *Desert 6.29pm*, *The Antipodes* (Red Stitch); and *When the Rain Stops Falling* (Iron Lung Theatre).

Film and TV credits include; *Warnie*, *Spreadsheet*, *New Gold Mountain*, *Offspring*, *Neighbours*, feature film *The Surrogate* as well as a host of short films.

He was recently nominated for a Green Room award for Outstanding Performance for his role in *Heroes of the Fourth Turning* at Red Stitch.



JEREMY PRYLES - SET & COSTUME DESIGN

Jeremy is a Theatre Maker and Designer of Set and Costume based in Melbourne.

He has a Bachelor of Fine Arts: Painting from Monash University and a Masters Of Design for Performance from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA)

Recent design work includes; *Supply* (Theatre Works Explosives Factory), *BIG FUNNY!* (Motley Bauhaus), *Secret Of The Raft* (Cardinia Cultural Centre), *Dark Web Mystery Box* (The [old] Motley Bauhaus), *Toby* (LaMama), *Kevin Peterson Stand Up Show* (The Butterfly Club), *Peter Pan* (Martin Myer Arena).

He has exhibited Art at D11 Docklands, SEVENTH gallery, Bundoora Homestead Gallery, Craft Victoria, and Platform Contemporary.



SIDNEY YOUNGER - LIGHTING DESIGN

Sidney is an emerging Lighting Designer, and a 2021 Production graduate from the Victorian College of the Arts. His design credits include: *Parade & Songs for a New World* (Soundworks); *Every Lovely Terrible Thing* (Lab Kelpie); *Insert Self* (Chunky Move & L2R); *Redhealer* (Back to Back); *Torch Song* (Taylor Made); *Flight & Steer* (Showfit, Dean Bryant); *Niusia & Still Buried* (Kathryn Yates); *Uncle Vanya* (Anthropocene Play Co); *Yiddish Divas: Red Tent* (Kadimah Theatre); *Songs of the Flesh* (Danger Ensemble); *Motherlod_^e* (Frenzy Theatre); *Bach's Universe* (Brandenberg Orchestra); *Play, Mechorstra, & Monark* (Scimm Dance); *Macbeth* (Bruce Langdon); *The Spook* (Daniela Farinacci); *The Hello Girls* (Jason Langley); and *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (Georgina Naidu).

Sidney has also worked as Assistant Lighting Designer on *Banaland* (Simon Philips), and *Salamander* (Maxine Doyle & Es Devlin), and Associate Lighting Designer for the Melbourne season of *Dictionary of Lost Words* (Sydney Theatre Company & State Theatre Company South Australia). His works have been seen by audiences across Australia, praised by reviews as "one of the best lighting designers Melbourne has to offer".

Sidney identifies as an artist with a disability and is passionate about increasing access and diversity within creative and technical teams.



RACHEL LEWINDON - SOUND DESIGN

Rachel Lewindon is an award-winning composer, sound designer and pianist.

She has been privileged to lend her creative voice to the bold projects and artistic visions of many Australian and international artists.

Critically acclaimed work includes; *The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven* (dir. Kitan Petkovski), *Far Away* (dir. Cassandra Fumi), *The Inheritance* (dir. Kitan Petkovski) amongst others.

If desired, more info can be found at www.rachellewindon.com, or alternatively by catching her on one of her daily walks to Balfe Park with her canine companion Henry.



MATT FURLANI - DIALECT COACH

Matt Furlani is a voice & dialect coach and actor, holding a Postgraduate Diploma in Voice Studies and Bachelor of Dramatic Art from the Victorian College of the Arts.

Matt has worked as voice and dialect coach on productions including; *The Almighty Sometimes*, *37*, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, *My Sister Jill*, *Bloom*, *Jacky*, *Come Rain or Come Shine*, *Admissions*, *The Truth and Home*, *I'm Darling* (Melbourne Theatre Company); & *Juliet* (Michael Cassel Group); *Looking for Alibrandi* (Malthouse); *Wolf Play*, *Heroes of the Fourth Turning*, *Iphigenia in Splott*, *The Cane*, *Pomona* and *Ulster American* (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre); *Death of a Salesman* (Hearth Theatre) and feature film *Daliland* (Magnolia Pictures). In 2016 he was a recipient of the Mike Walsh Fellowship, enabling him to travel to Scotland and work with renowned voice teacher – and author of *Freeing the Natural Voice* – Kristin Linklater. He has taught at 16th St Actors Studio since 2017.



A
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WHAT DO YOU HOPE PEOPLE TAKE AWAY FROM SEEING THIS PLAY?

“I always hope that my plays have some utility for audiences, something that is useful or applicable to their own lives. With this one, I really hope the audience leaves with a sense of hope. **But a kind of hope that isn't twee or simplistic, a kind of hope that is complex and hard-won.**”

AN INTERVIEW WITH

SAMUEL D. HUNTER

WHAT WAS YOUR INSPIRATION FOR WRITING A CASE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD?

A little over six years ago, my husband and I bought an apartment and adopted a child, pretty much right on top of one another. **And it was staggering to me how difficult both of those processes were—these very normal, middle-class goals, to own property and have a family.** I think it said something about our current moment, how difficult it is for so many Americans to lead middle-class lives. So I wanted to write a play that actively wrestled with that.

TELL US THE THOUGHT BEHIND THE TITLE. WHY SUCH AN EPIC TITLE FOR SUCH AN INTIMATE PLAY?

I know the title seems almost absurd, but that's sort of the point—the audiences enter into this play under this almost impossibly large title, and they are met with two guys in a cubicle who spend the first twenty minutes talking about a relatively small home loan. **So hopefully it puts the audience on the hunt—what exactly is this play up to?** And hopefully, by the end, it meets the grandiosity of its title.

DO YOU SEE ACFTEOG AS A RELIGIOUS PLAY? A SPIRITUAL PLAY? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?

I don't know if I would call it religious, but I think it's spiritual in the sense that **it's about searching for greater meaning in a deeply complicated present moment.** I recently was able to see a production of the play in the Netherlands, and I met a Dominican monk afterward who told me he felt the play was about **grace.** And I think he's right.

YOU HAVE BEEN A PARENT FOR SOME TIME NOW. HOW HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF BEING A PARENT ALTERED OR ENHANCED YOUR EXPERIENCE/APPRECIATION OF THE PLAY?

I started writing the play when my daughter was still an infant, and now she's six. So when I read or see the play now, **I feel a sense of optimism or gratitude, I guess.** But also the reminder that her childhood is happening so, so fast. One of the characters late in the play says something along the lines of **“I just want to hit pause on everything”** and I'm definitely feeling that nowadays.

WAS IT DIFFICULT TO WRITE A PLAY ABOUT MALE FRIENDSHIP? WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS SO RARE TO SEE MALE FRIENDSHIPS DEPICTED ONSTAGE OR IN MOVIES?

Something that really bothers me about depictions of male relationships in our media is that **we have an expectation that they are either going to punch each other or have sex.** And I think that's a real disservice to young men, teaching them that any kind of platonic male love is impossible. **It's a real reflection of the kind of toxic masculinity that is still so, so predominant in our culture.**

CREW



MARNI MOUNT - ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Marni Mount is a director, actor, and dramaturg living and working in Naarm. Focusing on new Australian writing for the stage and screen, she makes work that is formally inventive, visually imaginative, and unafraid to take on big ideas. With an interest in queer feminist dramaturgies and work that creatively engages with the canon, Marni has a reputation for making smart funny feminist work.

Since relocating to Melbourne from her hometown of Canberra in 2021, Marni has established herself as a promising new voice in the independent theatre scene. Her critically acclaimed world premiere of *Trophy Boys* by Emmanuelle Mattana will tour nationally in 2024, and she has directed the Melbourne premieres of *MinusOneSister* by Anna Barnes and *The Camel* by Dylan Van Den Berg.

Marni is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts and the Australian National University. She is the 2024 Red Stitch Actors' Theatre Hansen Graduate Director.



GENEVIEVE DAVIDSON - STAGE MANAGER

Genevieve graduated with a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Production and Design) from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2017. Since graduating she has worked across Australia in a variety of roles. She has also travelled to the UK to complete an internship as a Production Assistant for the UK tour of *The Crucible*.

Genevieve's credits include: *Personal* (Jodee Mundy Collaborations & Critical Stages), *Yentl* (Kadimah Yiddish Theatre), *The 39 Steps* (Hearth Theatre), *100 Years of the History of Dance* (Altitude Theatre), *The Gruffalo's Child* (CDP), *HIR* (Black Swan State Theatre Company), *Lovely Mess* (Riot Stage), *Il Pagliacci* (Freeze Frame Opera), *2:20AM* (Red Stitch Actors Theatre), *Rough Trade* (Rogue Projects), and many more.



Photos by Mami Mount



A CASE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD INSIDE THE REHEARSAL ROOM

Kevin Hofbauer, Darcy Kent, Gary Abrahams, Matt Furlani, Marni Mount & Genevieve Davidson.

RedStitch

2024
RedStitch

1 JUNE - 30 JUNE 2024



BLACKOUT SONGS

BY JOE WHITE

DIRECTED BY TOM HEALEY

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David Bowyer

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Penelope Thomson

Associate Producer
Krystalla Pearce

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Darcy Kent

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Catherine Cardinet
Andrew Domasevicius-Zilinskas
Sam Frey
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2024 HANSEN GRADUATES

Alfie Baker - **Acting**
Lousie Fitzgerald - **Design**
Marni Mount - **Directing**
Lucinda Smith - **Acting**
Chiara Wenban - **Design**



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THEATRE

2024

